

County Snapshot

County Snapshot

Merced County is located in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, about 100 miles southwest of San Francisco and 275 miles northwest of Los Angeles. Encompassing approximately 2000 square miles, the county spans from the coast range to the foothills of Yosemite National Park.

A projected population of 319,800 by the year 2020 will amount to a 48.6 percent increase over the current population. The city of Merced is the largest of six incorporated cities within the county.

The 1999 annual average statistics show the civilian labor force for Merced County to be 84,800 with an unemployment rate of 13.3 percent. Typically, agriculturally oriented counties tend to have higher unemployment rates and greater seasonal variations in employment. The state's unemployment rate was 5.2 percent for the same year.

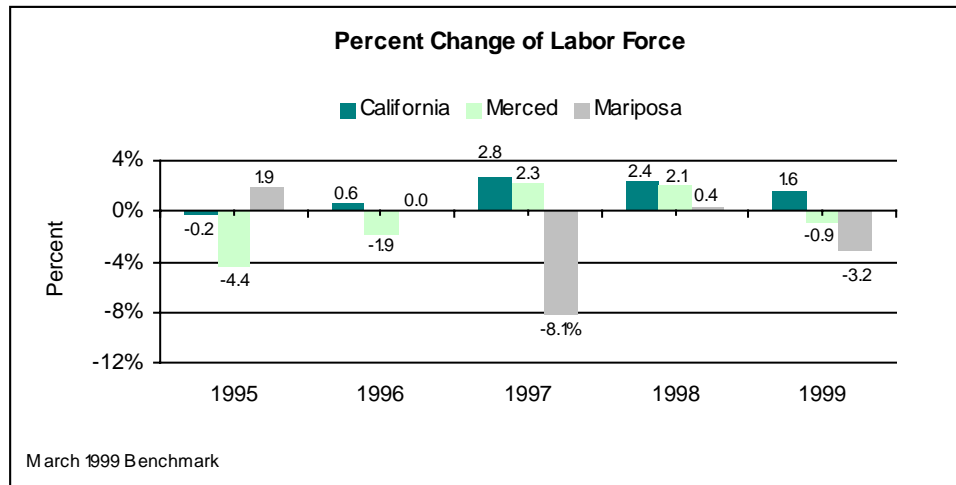
Agriculture, the largest industry division in the county, accounts for 18.9 percent of total employment. Other significant industry sectors are government, providing 18.7 percent of employment and manufacturing which accounts for 17.8 percent of the total.

Most of the jobs in Merced's future nonfarm wage and salary employment will be in the retail trade, manufacturing, and services industries. Retail trade, the fastest growing industry, is projected to add 2,600 jobs by 2004, a growth of 26.3 percent. Manufacturing is projected to grow by 21.1 percent with most of the new jobs in the durable goods sector, and services is projected to grow by 20.2 percent.

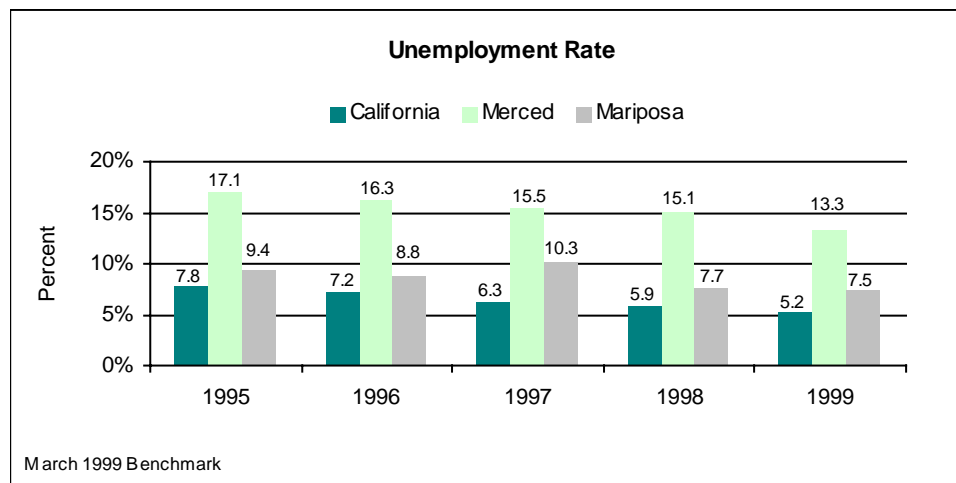
Job growth creates opportunity and is considered to be one measure of economic health. Merced County continues to record job growth and lower unemployment rates.

LABOR FORCE

Merced County's civilian labor force has grown slowly over the years 1995 to 1999, increasing 1.6 percent. Weather related disasters such as the winter storms in 1996, the floods in February 1998 and the freeze of December 1998 have been a major cause for slow growth in the area.

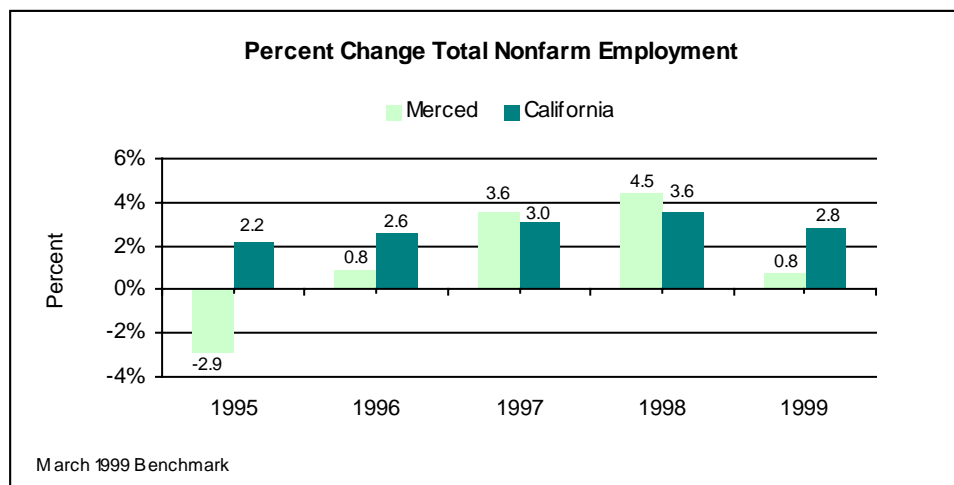


Since 1995, the annual average unemployment rate for both Merced and Mariposa counties has declined, indicative of employment opportunities in the area. The annual average unemployment rate for Merced County was 13.3 percent in 1999, down 3.8 percentage points from a rate of 17.1 percent recorded in 1995.

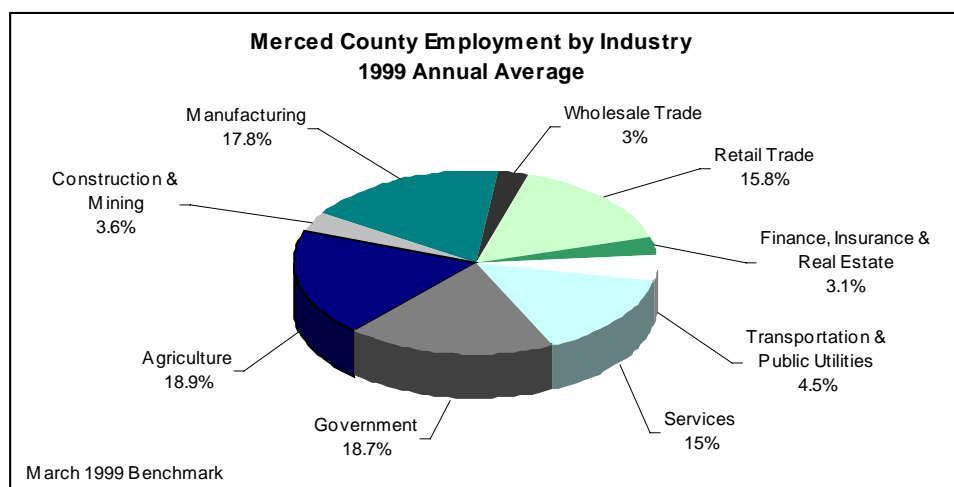


INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

Merced County's nonfarm wage and salary employment posted significant job growth in 1998, due, in part, to gains in the manufacturing industry. Over the years 1995 to 1999, the county recorded 9.9 percent cumulative growth in total nonfarm employment.



In 1999, agriculture, government, and manufacturing dominated Merced County employment. Projections for the forecast period 1997 to 2004 indicate that 70 percent of the job growth in nonfarm employment will be in the retail trade, manufacturing, and services sectors.



OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Demographic trends, shifts in demands for products or services, technological innovations and the way business is conducted are some of the variables that drive employment in an occupation up or down. Also, occupations which have large employment and have high turnover rates generally provide the most job openings. Merced County is projected to have employment opportunities in these high turnover occupations.

Associated Occupations	RETAIL TRADE 1997 – 2004 Projected Growth 26.3%
	Combined Food Preparation and Service Workers – 410 job openings. Do both food preparation and food service. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$5.93
	Cashiers – 390 job openings. Handle cash and credit payments, make change, give receipts, account for all payments, and perform related clerical duties. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$6.89
	Food Preparation Workers – 290 job openings. Keep kitchen work areas clean and orderly, keep restaurant equipment and utensils clean, move supplies and wash dishes, trays, pots and pans used in cooking and serving. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$6.19
	Salespersons, Retail – 250 job openings. Get the customer interested by describing the merchandise and showing how it is used. May also order merchandise, stock shelves, mark price tags, take inventory and prepare displays. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$7.17
	Waiters and Waitresses – 170 job openings. Serve food and drink to customers. Duties may include explanation about how the meal is prepared, wine recommendations or simple food preparation at the table. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$5.92
Associated Occupations	MANUFACTURING 1997 – 2004 Projected Growth 21.1%
	Assemblers, Fabricators-Except Machine, Electrical – 420 job openings. Assemble and/or fit together parts to form complete units or subassemblies at a bench, conveyor line, or on the floor. Duties are of a non-precision nature. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$7.80
	General Managers, Top Executives – 150 job openings. Include both top and mid-level managers whose duties and responsibilities are too diverse and general in nature to be classified in any functional or line area of management and administration. Work Experience, plus a Bachelor's or higher. Median Hourly Wage - \$25.79
	First-Line Supervisors And Managers, Production – 110 job openings. Directly supervise and coordinate activities of production and operating workers, such as testers, precision workers, machine setters and operators, assemblers, fabricators, or plant and system operators. Work Experience. Median Hourly Wage - \$15.32
	Truck Drivers, Heavy – 110 job openings. Drive tractor-trailer combinations or trucks with a capacity of more than three tons to transport and deliver goods, livestock, or materials in liquid, loose or packaged form. They may be required to unload trucks. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$11.77
	Welders and Cutters – 100 job openings. Use flamecutting, hand, arc, and gas welding equipment, and gas torches, to weld together metal components of such products as pipelines, autos, boilers and ships, or join together components of fabricated sheet metal assemblies. Post-secondary vocational education. Median Hourly Wage - \$9.68
Associated Occupations	SERVICES 1997 – 2004 Projected Growth 20.2%
	Nurse Aides, Orderlies, Attendants – 90 job openings. Help care for physically or mentally ill, injured, disabled, or infirm individuals confined to hospitals and residential care facilities. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$7.56
	General Managers, Top Executives – 60 job openings. Include both top and mid-level managers whose duties and responsibilities are too diverse and general in nature to be classified in any functional or line area of management and administration. Work Experience, plus a Bachelor's or higher. Median Hourly Wage - \$25.79
	Registered Nurses – 60 job openings. Provide direct bedside care and assist physicians with examinations, chart the conditions of patients, give medication, and administer treatment as ordered by the doctor. May supervise auxiliary nursing personnel. Associate Degree. Median Hourly Wage - \$22.81
	Receptionists, Information Clerks – 50 job openings. Answer inquiries and obtain information for the general public concerning activities conducted at an establishment, such as the location of offices or persons within the firm, departments within the store, or services within the hotel. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$7.63
	Waiters and Waitresses – 50 job openings. Serve food and drink to customers. Duties may include explanation about how the meal is prepared, wine recommendations or simple food preparation at the table. Short-term on-the-job training. Median Hourly Wage - \$5.92

This **County Snapshot** is a product of:
State of California
Employment Development Department
Labor Market Information Division
(916) 262-2162